

**Friis, John**

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**From:** diane [setget@optonline.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 22, 2009 8:56 PM  
**To:** Friis, John  
**Subject:** Testimony

I am the mother of an 11-year-old special needs little girl. My husband and I have two other children as well and have been through the ringer with the Westport Connecticut Public School System. I implore this committee not to shift the burden of proof in due process hearings from the school districts, which currently are required to prove they offer an appropriate program in Connecticut, to parents.

Having a special needs child is harder than any typical parent or typical adult can imagine. We are not asking for the moon. I am perfectly willing to "fill-in" with special Ed tutors, therapists and specialist out side of the public school system. I am asking; however, for at least the bare minimum for our children. No one has our children's best interest at heart more than we do (the parents). The public school on the other hand is fueled not by a sense of justice but by small mindedness, ego, and poor judgment, money appropriation for their own pet projects and not with our children's best interests. The public school system, if this bill is allowed, will have tremendous power over the parents and the potential future of our children. I can tell you I was made to doubt my own ability as a mother at one point because of the aggressive finger-pointing that goes on within the system. If the tables were to turn in favor of burden of proof on the parent, it will become even worse. And what of our children who are the future adult citizens? Doesn't it make sense to help them when they are still children so they can become a viable part of our society instead of burdens of the state? Please do not allow this to happen. Many of those individuals leading our special Ed programs have acted virulently towards us parents. We, who are already struggling every day with difficulties, will now have to bare the added burden of proof. This kind of proof often takes so long that the child will grow up before anything can be implemented! Delay tactics are rampant! Bad programs are made to look good on paper. As an American citizen, I really believe it is a prejudice of the worst kind. Who better than the parent can know best what an appropriate program should look like? Who better than the parent has a vested interest in the life and education of that child? Let's move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this great country of ours and not backwards. I beg you to please not shift the burden of proof from school districts to the parents.

Sincerely,

Mrs. D. Yormark  
Westport, Ct.

3/23/2009